

American Opinion Summary

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THE PRESIDENT'S CUBA POLICY

The course set by the President in regard to Cuba is widely endorsed, and assurances of general support have come from many sources.

A common view is expressed by the assertion of Hearst's New York Journal-American that "President Kennedy moved along the only honorable course left open." The Boston Herald says "we would not wish him to have done anything less, and we believe that the American people want nothing less."

A Gallup Poll survey of initial public reaction to the President's speech indicated that more than eight out of ten Americans who had heard about the "blockade decision" approved of it.

Particular points of the President's course, or of his speech are commended by some. The Baltimore Sun holds that the President's "patience in waiting until he had incontrovertible evidence that the Soviet Union was aggressively establishing in Cuba a major base of offensive political power has greatly strengthened our position."

The New York Herald Tribune says that his speech, "while properly blunt and direct, by no means excludes the paths of negotiation and discussion." The Washington Post says that it was good that he "directly addressed himself to the Cuban people."

The decision on Cuba has at last made Khrushchev understand U.S. determination re Berlin and other points of conflict, some stress (e.g., Jos. Alsop, Jas. Reston). Agreeing, Wm. S. White adds that, as a necessary reassurance to the nation, Kennedy should dismiss those who earlier pressed "the refusal of adequate military support to the patriots' invasion in April 1961."

However, some criticism of the President's timing comes from a number of sources (e.g., Chicago Tribune, Detroit Free Press, N.Y. Post, Wall St. Journal, David Lawrence, Max Lerner, Republican Senators Goldwater (Ariz.) and Keating (N.Y.)).

Most of this group raise a question as to why the move was not made sooner. The Wall Street Journal, while stressing the importance of supporting the President, says: "For months now... thoughtful and informed people have been talking of exactly the danger which the President described so vividly." It adds: "The President is not untouched by the fact that his action comes on the eve of an election."

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(Cont'd.)

Differing from the others, the New York Post asks: "Why did we not first present the issue to both the O.A.S. and the U.N. Security Council?"

A certain amount of political criticism is also indicated. One Republican spokesman is reported by Cabell Phillips as saying that the Cuban issue is "dead for the duration," but Phillips adds that "there is an element of skepticism in many of the comments... which implies a 'so far so good' attitude" (in N.Y. Times). Former President Eisenhower is reported as saying "we are free to ask and to learn how we arrived at our present state, even in foreign affairs."

The seriousness of the crisis is widely recognized. Many agree with the Baltimore Sun that the U.S. "reaction is fraught with risks for this country and for the general peace; but its purpose is to preserve the peace."

But there is some feeling that the Russians will not start a nuclear war over Cuba. "The Soviet Union has no vital interests in Cuba," the Washington Post says. "It cannot afford to jeopardize its own survival for the sake of maintaining an anti-American irritant 4000 miles from its homeland." To the New York Times it is "incredible that Mr. Khrushchev would fire the first shot against us," and the Times adds that "he will not if our military and also the world's moral forces are mobilized against him."

A few specific suggestions are made for strengthening the U.S. position. The Philadelphia Inquirer suggests that "the Administration should emphasize again and again... the fundamental difference between establishment of U.S. missile bases around the Soviet Union and the establishment of Soviet missile bases in Cuba."

"The positive thrust," says the Washington Post, "must be to encourage the Cubans themselves to restore their country to dignity, freedom and genuine independence."

The support coming from other countries is welcomed. "OAS support of the blockade affords a secure legal base for this hemispheric policy," the Washington Post comments. Scripps-Howard's Washington News concludes that OAS "unanimity could not have come at a more timely moment" (somewhat similarly, Wash. Star). The Philadelphia Inquirer sees "a heartening measure of assurance in the generally favorable reaction of the Free World to the moves ordered by President Kennedy."